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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 049813

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/10/2018  
TAGS: PREL PHUM UNSC BM  
SUBJECT: DEMARCHE: FRENCH UNSC RESOLUTION ON BURMA

Classified By: IO PDAS James Warlick, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

¶1. (SBU) The Department requests action addressees to contact host governments (with the exception of France) immediately at an appropriately high level to urge them to consider a draft resolution prepared by France describing the humanitarian situation in Burma and calling on the regime to remove obstacles that are preventing timely and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance to those who are most in need (text is at para 7 below). The French indicated that if there is no progress, they are prepared to introduce this resolution at a meeting of the UN Security Council, possibly as early as May 12. Action addressees should note that the humanitarian situation in Burma continues to deteriorate rapidly, which could require the Council to act expeditiously on humanitarian grounds.

OBJECTIVES

¶2. (SBU) The Department requests addressees to pursue the following objectives in the demarche:

-- Convey our deep concern about the present humanitarian situation in those parts of Burma affected by Cyclone Nargis, where more than 1.5 million people may be without adequate shelter, sufficient food and clean water, and in desperate need of medical attention;

-- Underline the need for the Burmese regime to immediately allow access to affected areas for UN and international relief workers in order to provide aid to worst-hit areas;

-- Clarify that this is a distinct need apart from Burmese willingness to "accept" international aid delivered to the Rangoon airport;

-- Note that an effective humanitarian response requires more than the provision of supplies; it requires skilled disaster personnel whose expertise is urgently needed in order to develop a response appropriate to the scale of this disaster. The UN has personnel on the ground, but they are stretched to the limit.

-- Note that with the humanitarian crisis in the Irrawaddy delta region of Burma creating a danger of loss of life on a scale rivaling the 2004 tsunami, it is time for all countries to put political differences aside and cooperate in providing humanitarian relief;

-- If the Burmese do not allow delivery of assistance and access by aid personnel, the U.S. is prepared to support a French resolution in the Security Council (text below). Request that Council members support such action.

-- (For Moscow and Beijing, only if they indicate they cannot

support the proposed text) Ask that, if they do not feel they could support this text, they would at least acknowledge the dire humanitarian need and consider abstaining should this resolution come to a vote.

-- (For Paris only) Indicate our support for France's initiative and our desire to work with them at the UN;

-- (For Jakarta Only) Emphasize our sincere humanitarian desire to assist people who are suffering. Noting Indonesia's recent experience with a natural disaster of this scale, urge Indonesia to recognize that the situation requires a response by the Security Council in order to avoid any further unnecessary loss of lives.

REPORTING DEADLINE

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¶3. (U) The Department requests action addressees to report results of their efforts by May 12 by cable slugged for IO/UNP-Paul Wickberg and EAP/MLS-Aaron Cope and USUN-Jeff Reneau.

BACKGROUND

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¶4. (SBU) Latest reports by the Burmese government indicate over 23,000 dead and 40,000 missing after Cyclone Nargis impacted southern Burma, the Irrawaddy Delta and Rangoon. UN sources estimate between 63,000 and 100,000 fatalities, and some NGO sources estimate double that or even higher, with over 1.5 million affected, the worst natural disaster since the 2004 earthquake/tsunami. Partial reports from the affected areas indicate that several populous delta towns have almost ceased to exist, and that hundreds of thousands lack sufficient food, clean water, housing and any form of medical care.

¶5. (C) In this crisis, the Burmese military regime's reactions have been hesitant, inefficient and inadequate. The regime has refused to issue entry visas to most humanitarian workers. On May 9, the Burmese military confiscated its cargo of a World Food Program (WFP) relief flight. The WFP announced it was suspending further aid flights until the situation was resolved, but later announced that two more flights would be dispatched to Burma on May 10, pending resolution of outstanding delivery and distribution issues. Meanwhile, U.S. and other aid workers stationed at Bangkok continued to wait for visas, which Embassy Rangoon reported could only be issued with the personal permission of Senior General Than Shwe.

¶6. (C) The French told USUN on May 9 that they would introduce a resolution, centered strictly on the humanitarian situation, and try to get a UNSC emergency meeting to vote on it. The French subsequently agreed with the P-3 and like-minded that the resolution should be reserved until we see whether Burmese behavior in regard to humanitarian deliveries is obstructive or cooperative. While the Department sees a possibility that China or Russia could veto this resolution, in light of their known aversion to UNSC action on Burma and out of concern that humanitarian issues represent an inappropriate subject for Council action, nevertheless we believe an effort to explain our position should be made. Although South Africa, Indonesia and Vietnam backed China's and Russia's position in expert-level discussions at the UN this week, the Indonesian Deputy Permrep told IO May 9 that his country's major concern was that the tragedy not be politicized, and that it might support a UN effort on purely humanitarian lines.

DRAFT FRENCH RESOLUTION TEXT

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¶7. (U) Beginning of text:

The Security Council,

Expressing its utmost sympathy to the people of Myanmar after the massive loss of life and the destruction suffered in the wake of Cyclone Nargis, which struck the country on 2 May,

Extending its deepest condolences to the families of those who have been killed, injured, or made homeless because of the storm,

Recalling that the primary responsibility in providing humanitarian assistance to the population affected by the cyclone belongs to the Government of Myanmar,

Acknowledging that the destruction caused by this natural disaster is of unprecedented scale and requires massive international aid to the areas affected,

Welcoming the coordinating role of the United Nations and its offer to extend necessary assistance and to mobilize international aid to assist the Government and people of Myanmar, while deplored the bureaucratic difficulties met by the UN agencies in providing urgently needed aid,

Expressing concern at the slow response by the Government of Myanmar to various offers of assistance by the international community,

Stressing that any further delay in the providing of international humanitarian assistance to the areas affected by the cyclone puts the population in grave danger of further massive loss of life on a massive scale,

Reaffirming its commitment to the independence and territorial integrity of Myanmar,

OP1. Urges member states to urgently provide emergency relief, by all means available, to the population in regions affected by the cyclone, in coordination with the Government of Myanmar;

OP2. Calls upon the Government of Myanmar to grant full and immediate access to the affected areas to international humanitarian relief teams so they can provide urgent assistance to people in need;

OP3. Calls upon the Government of Myanmar to provide necessary conditions for the immediate resumption of the delivery of food aid by the World Food Programme;

OP4. Decides to remain seized of the matter.

End of text.  
RICE